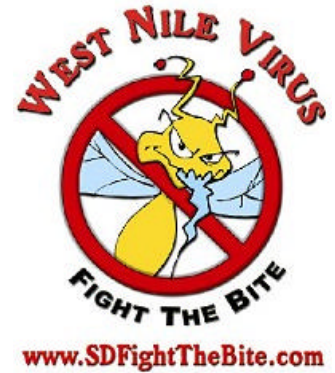


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS



Q. What is West Nile Virus and how does it spread?

- A. West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus. It is spread by mosquitoes that bite infected birds, and then can bite us. No human vaccine is available and there is no cure.

Q. How long has West Nile Virus been in the United States?

- A. U.S. health officials first detected the virus in the New York area in 1999. Since then, 40 states have reported confirmed cases of West Nile Virus with almost 4,000 humans infected. More than 250 people have died from the virus or its complications.

Q. Can you get West Nile Virus from another person?

- A. No. West Nile virus is not transmitted from person-to-person. For example, you cannot get West Nile Virus from touching or kissing a person who has the disease, or from a health care worker who has treated someone with the disease.

Q. How many types of animals have been infected with the West Nile Virus?

- A. Although the vast majority of infections have been identified in birds, it has also been shown to infect horses, dogs, cats, bats, chipmunks, skunks, squirrels and domestic rabbits. A vaccine for horses is available. To report a dead bird for collection and testing please call (858) 694-2888.

Q. Who is at risk of getting West Nile Virus?

- A. All residents of areas where virus activity has been identified are at risk of getting the virus. Persons over 50 years of age and persons with compromised immune systems are the most at risk of developing serious complications.

Q. What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus?

- A. It's important to know that many people infected with the virus experience no symptoms or very mild symptoms ranging from fever, headache and body aches, to skin rash and swollen lymph glands. Severe cases may be marked by high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis. The virus can result in encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and death.

Q. What should I do if I think I am infected?

- A. Remember that less than 1% of persons infected with the virus will develop severe illness. However, if you think you have contracted West Nile Virus and experience symptoms such as high fever, confusion, muscle weakness and severe headaches, contact your health care provider.

Q. How do I protect myself from West Nile Virus?

- A. When outdoors, especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, wear light-colored long sleeved shirts and pants. Insect repellents containing DEET (diethyltoliamide) are most effective at keeping mosquitoes away. Follow product directions carefully and consult your physician if you have any questions or concerns.

Q. How do I protect my community from West Nile Virus?

- A. The best way to reduce the mosquito population is to eliminate any standing water on your property. Empty buckets, flowerpots, wheelbarrows, etc. so mosquitoes cannot establish a breeding site. Maintain the screens on your doors and windows to keep the mosquitoes out of your home. Report mosquito breeding areas to the County Department of Environmental Health at 858.694.2888.